

ARLINGTON COUNCIL ON AGING

2004 ANNUAL REPORT

The mission of the Council on Aging (COA) is to provide advocacy and support services to help Arlington elders live dignified and independent lives.

The Council's primary responsibilities are to identify the unmet needs of the community's elder population; to design, promote, or implement services to address such needs; and to coordinate existing services in the community.

Significant changes in the Senior Services field have taken place this year. Much effort at the Council on Aging has been to bring information regarding these changes to the seniors and their families. The *Medicare Modernization Act of 2003* heralded the most significant Medicare changes since the beginning of the Medicare Program. Also, Massachusetts has redefined and expanded its *Elder Abuse Reporting & Elder Protective Service Programs*. Direct services have continued in response to the growing needs of seniors, particularly the frail and homebound. Service providers, both public and private, are finding that demands for services are increasing while funding and support are decreasing. Despite such challenges, the COA has moved forward through significant agency accomplishments for 2004:

- Prioritized the needs of Arlington's elders and their families, in the light of decreasing resources, and directed service and program efforts where they were most needed.
- The COA held a well-received public forum in July to address and clarify planned Medicare changes, with speakers from local, state and federal agencies. Upcoming changes in the Medicare Program were announced, along with the introduction of the Medicare-approved Prescription Discount Card Program.
- 14% increase in the number of *COA volunteers* in the past year, in service areas such as Medical Escorts, Friendly Visitors, Tax Abatement Assistants, Health Benefit

Counselors, Health & Wellness volunteers, Intergenerational Task Force volunteers, S.H.I.N.E. volunteers. *COA volunteers gave 6,600 hours of service* this year to the Town's elderly through the Council on Aging.

- Increased participation in *COA Health & Wellness Programs* under the direction of the Geriatric Nurse Specialist.
- Due to a successful pilot program the previous year, established a permanent COA subsidy program, *The Charles Sevoyan Dental Subsidy Program*, to begin to address senior's dental needs.
- Secured significant grant funding in the areas of client medical transportation, outreach effort (brochure printing), van replacement.
- Produced a third (updated) printing of the COA's *Directory Of Senior Services*.
- Advocacy on issues affecting seniors continues at the local, regional and state level.
- Through the agency's lift-equipped vans and the subsidized taxi program, provided over 10,000 one-way rides for Arlington seniors.
- The COA's local cable television program, *"Golden Opportunities"*, received the "Best Informational Series 2004" award from Comcast.

2004 saw requests for service remain at a high level. There was some restoration of staff hours to the Social worker and Clerk/Secretary positions through increased Town and State funding.

The COA Board saw some membership change, bringing new talents and ideas to an active Council, and study has begun of new initiatives such as *S.A.L.T. (Seniors and Law Enforcement Together)* and TRIAD programs. The position of *Council on Aging Associate Member*, a nonvoting position, was approved by the Board and promises to generate more new faces and enthusiasm to the planning effort. Staffing made extra efforts to cover service needs

during the flu season, through the holidays, and while our full-time van driver was out on medical leave.

The Arlington Council on Aging wishes to extend our heartfelt thanks to those who have made donations to our agency this past year, allowing us to continue the important work of serving Arlington's elders in vital areas of need. We are particularly thankful for the grants and gifts from The Elizabeth and George L. Sanborn Foundation for the Treatment & Cure of Cancer (*Cancer transportation subsidy*), Minuteman Senior Services (*Title III grant in support of the COA/AYCC Grandparents' Support Group*), The Cambridge Savings Bank (*third printing of the COA's Senior Services Directory*), The Retired Men's' Club of Arlington (*annual Thanksgiving Day home-delivered meals for the homebound*), Park Avenue Congregational Church, Park Avenue Nursing & Rehabilitation Center, The Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (*grants for new van, and for printing of an elder driving brochure*), The Executive Office of Elder Affairs (*increase in local funding*) and the many individuals who have made monetary or durable medical equipment donations.

Such donations make possible, amongst other things, the continuance of our transportation subsidy funds. These funds use no municipal, state or federal funding. Private donations alone provide much-needed services to those who are unable to afford them. Your kindness and generosity have also made possible the availability of canes, walkers and wheelchairs for those who needed them.

We also wish to recognize those who have volunteered their time and efforts to bring some help to others: our Medical Escorts, Telephone Reassurance Volunteers, Friendly Visitors, Tax Abatement Workers, our Office Volunteers, the Council on Aging Board of Directors, and those who have volunteered their skills and energies for special projects throughout the year. These folks donate time and talent throughout the year and are little noticed by the general

public. Yet their contributions, over 6,600 hours this year, are known and appreciated by those who receive their gifts of time, attention and caring.

Initiatives for the new year will be to:

- *Increase delivery of client services through volunteers* (Medical Escorts, Friendly Visitors, Tax Abatement Assistants, Health Benefit Counselors, Health & Wellness volunteers, Intergenerational Task Force volunteers, S.H.I.N.E. volunteers) by increasing the COA volunteer force by 15 volunteers in 2005.
- *Increase client fees* for participation in the Dial-a-Ride Subsidized Taxi Program to partially address rising Program costs, increased with new 2005 contract. While Program costs have risen, client fees have remained unchanged for the past three years.
- *Increase delivery of Social Services* closer to previous levels by increasing Social Worker's time through Elder Affairs Formula (State) grant and Minuteman Senior Services grant.
- *Institute revised participation guidelines and closer stewardship* of the COA Sanborn Transportation Subsidy Fund to allow more efficient use of these grant funds in 2005.

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